

Appendix E

Letter from HCC and EHDC
Leaders: Councillor Nick
Adams-King and Councillor
Richard Millard



Hampshire County Council

Our ref: O-LO-2025-016
29.09.2025

Councillor Nick Adams-King
Leader of the County Council
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Dear Leaders

It is with a great sense of disappointment and frustration that I write to you today.

Following our initial joint work on the Interim Proposal, both Richard and I were very clear that we broke away from the joint work in a respectful and appropriate manner, with a commitment to continue to proactively pursue information sharing opportunities, and in doing so we shared a set of collective standards which I have attached.

Furthermore, the Interim Plan which our councils collectively agreed, stated that *'The councils across Hampshire and the Solent have prioritised a professional, equitable and collaborative relationship that underpins the process by which we have developed this interim plan (and will continue to harness throughout the full timeline)'*.

Hampshire County Council and East Hampshire District Council continue to operate by these standards. What we say, how we conduct ourselves and the culture we create matters. It matters to the residents we represent, it matters to the staff for whom we are responsible, and it matters for the new organisations we will form through this process.

And this is why, in the draft business case we published in July, you will see that we have adhered to these standards. We have considered evidence, analysed options and offered ideas. But there is not one single sentence – not one word – of criticism or negativity about your authorities or the services you deliver. We are respectful of your services, and we know how committed your workforces are to improving the lives and the outcomes of our residents.

It is, therefore, frankly shameful that you have felt the need to criticise the services that Hampshire County Council delivers and, by extension, the staff delivering those services as a fundamental part of your published Business Case. Whilst we will all have political disagreements in the course of our work, I am staggered by the lack of respect shown to fellow public servants by each of the twelve organisations, whose Leaders have knowingly endorsed and put their names to such a document. And rather than accepting that it is entirely valid to consider a range of options, you seem to be making untrue and irresponsible comments in relation to the alternatives presented in an attempt to undermine or diminish the County Council and East Hampshire's case rather than focusing on evidencing your own case.

In the interests of accuracy and appropriate conduct, I therefore request that the following statements are removed from your business case and corrected in any formal reports for decision.

Page 42: “Local NHS providers – Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, HLOWFT, Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Trust, and the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Integrated Care Board – have all expressed support for the North Hampshire model. Their views are born out of frustration with their current relationship with Hampshire County Council and attempts to work collaboratively at a local level and a and a lack of transparency about their current financial situation.”

We understand that our NHS partners have already asked for this damaging and unprofessional statement to be removed, which does not reflect their position. However, I fail to understand how any of you or your senior officers would endorse such a statement to be included in a published document.

Page 73: “Hampshire County Council faces a budget gap of £136 million, rising to £206 million in 2027/28 and £281 million in 2028/29. The county council has acknowledged that even if they were able to balance their budgets in the short term, it would still likely lead to a S114 notice in the future. Without genuine transformation, the county council’s budget gap is likely to widen due to unachieved savings and continued growth in demand and spend.”

The County Council has achieved over £500m of savings over the past decade and is well on track to deliver our plans for £134m of savings identified last financial year. This is a longstanding, robust and well governed process to delivering financial savings, and there is no evidence to suggest the County Council has unachieved savings. To the contrary, the Independent Panel we invited in to review our finances publicly stated that:

*‘The Council has an excellent record of financial management, with strong foundations in place.....It is evident that the finance leadership team has a detailed grasp of the financial challenge that it faces and is able to articulate this in a clear and effective way to elected members and senior officers..... **this strategy has served the Council well, enabling it to consistently achieve its savings targets allowing it to balance annual budgets**’*

Page 85: Currently fragmented commissioning and poor alignment between HCC and local district services hinder integrated care, with gaps emerging around transitions, homelessness support and community health, workforce instability and leadership turnover adding strain, while the extra care housing model is increasingly unfit for purpose, contributing to delayed discharges and inadequate service access in deprived communities.

This assertion does not reflect the reality of the situation. We work on a daily basis with district and boroughs as well as landlords of Extra Care housing schemes ensuring all voids are filled in a timely manner, housing waiting lists are reduced and most importantly the resident has the right care. We have done this successfully with 99% occupancy levels consistently achieved across the schemes.

Additionally, we are seen as leading the delivery of Extra Care housing across England and have been invited to present to both national and regional bodies as well as other councils on the operational process, the finances and the innovative demand work that took place in 2024. This work was recognised by Health partners as an innovative modelling on demand only typically done in the NHS - no one in

Social Care commissioning in any council has done this type of modelling. The inclusion of this comment regarding an 'unfit for purpose' Extra Care housing model is especially surprising given Portsmouth City Council have themselves approached the County Council for advice regarding this service.

If you feel there is genuinely a gap in the services we collectively offer, then we should be working together now to ensure we improve efficiency and delivery, not waiting for reorganisation. I therefore look forward to you providing your proposals for how these arrangements between our councils can be improved.

Page 91: “At the Hampshire County Council level, decisions about children and young people are often centralised at a very large scale. However, this can mean that local options and interventions are overlooked, leading to unnecessary contacts and referrals.”

This assertion is entirely inaccurate and is not the County Council's operating model for Children's Services which is rated as Outstanding by OFSTED. The only central decisions taken for children are in the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) in relation to threshold for service. This is exactly the same approach taken by all three other upper tier local authorities. All day-to-day decisions are taken in our neighbourhood Family Help teams.

Page 120: “We have also made a collective effort to engage collaboratively with Hampshire County Council and East Hampshire District Council to get their views to inform our own proposal. We arranged a special workshop with them to test their views on our emerging work, but they were unwilling to discuss them with us, and we were instead directed to a report they were later going to be publishing for their Cabinet and Council meetings.”

The County Council has engaged collaboratively throughout the process and to suggest otherwise is disappointing. I will remind you that our collaborative data sharing agreement was catalysed and established by the County Council and we have facilitated additional workshops with our key statutory officers to engage with all Local Authorities across our area and with respective advisors and consultants. Your paper refers to a meeting which was set up with limited information in advance and little opportunity for us to form a professional view on work that we had not been part of.

Page 204: “We recognise that Hampshire County Council (HCC) and East Hampshire District Council (EHDC) have made misleading statements that you have to base a new unitary on an existing upper-tier council, even though we understand that their own proposal does not mirror the same boundaries as any existing upper-tier authority.”

It is entirely inappropriate to suggest that the County Council has in any way made misleading statements, and we are confident that our proposals are based on data, evidence, the professional views of my statutory officers and independent advice. Clearly, we can have respectful differences of opinion, but this is quite frankly a shameful statement and one that I would never expect between local government colleagues.

I have now spoken at over 40 public meetings to talk about both devolution and local government reorganisation. I have been fastidious in remaining even handed in my

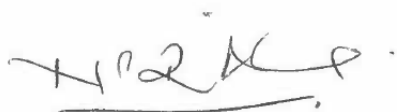
narrative about both sets of proposals, as I have in any press comment in saying there is 'no right answer', I expect the same courtesy to be shown in return.

I acknowledge and value your right to explore alternative proposals – presenting the Government and our residents with a diverse range of options and genuine choice is a positive thing. And of course, there will be several aspects of your published case with which I fundamentally disagree, as you will no doubt disagree with elements of ours. What deeply concerns me, however, is the apparent emphasis on deflection and the presentation of information that lacks accuracy and is fundamentally damaging to our future relationship - and can only undermine the trust our residents can have in local government – something which I'm sure we can all agree matters now more than ever.

It is discourteous and I expected better of you all.

I look forward to receiving your response regarding the removal of these incorrect and misleading statements, to ensure we can continue our respective work within the realm of healthy debate and not mired in inaccuracy and unprofessionalism.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Adams-King', with a horizontal line underneath.

Cllr Nick Adams-King
Leader of Hampshire County Council.

Appendix - Approach and standards – sent to Chief Executives on 4 April 2025

1. We will consciously seek to develop proposals built on the Government Criteria, the Shared Hampshire and Solent area principles and the County Council's LGR guiding principles and consider options in relation to the services and duties that we, as an Upper Tier authority, are responsible for.
2. We recognise the need to support our staff through change, noting that our language, conduct and actions in relation to the development of options has the potential to create a legacy (positive or otherwise), for us and our staff, that we will carry with us into roles in the new organisations.
3. We will collaborate with transparency and integrity, recognising that we all have a common goal to deliver successful local government reorganisation.
4. We recognise the validity and value of differing viewpoints, and will treat everyone with professional respect. We recognise that it is appropriate and understandable that different opinions will need to be explored and that this exploration will ultimately lead to better overall outcomes.
5. While we may hold different views as we are developing options, when a final option is agreed we will unreservedly support its implementation.
6. We will act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using evidence and data to form an objective view.
7. We continue to deliver our crucial core services that our residents rely on throughout the development of proposals and subsequent transitional period. We will therefore seek to balance resources appropriately and ensure the LGR/Devolution work and associated requests for input are carefully planned and managed.